CIDAC 006
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TL 4928
1986

CANADA ASIA
working group

A Canadian Inter-Church Coalition on Asian Concerns

Submission to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights:
*Philippines
*Sri Lanka
*Republic of Korea
*East Timor

The Canada Asia Working Group (CAWG) is supported by the United, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches of Canada, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, CUSO, the Scarboro Foreign Mission, the Canadian Friends Service Committee and Oxfam of Canada. Others involved are GATT-Fly, the Ecumenical Forum of Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches, and concerned individuals.

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EAST TIMOR

INTRODUCTION

Is is now ten years since Indonesia carried out a brutal invasion and occupation of East Timor. In defiance of repeated U.N. resolutions calling for its withdrawal, Indonesia continues to illegally occupy East Timor. The subsequent Timorese death toll, from the war itself and from hunger caused by crop bombardment and forced resettlement, may be as much as one-third of the original population (650,000).

The Indonesian military has sealed off East Timor from scrutiny. Amnesty International, for example, has been permanently barred. It is often difficult to get current information on the human rights situation. What reports do emerge are often necessarily anonymous due to fear of reprisals from the Indonesian army. Nevertheless, information obtained by church and international human rights organizations shows a pattern of gross and systematic human rights violations.

APPARENT CONTINUATION OF THE SEPTEMBER, 1983, MILITARY OFFENSIVE

In September, 1983, up to 20,000 additional Indonesian troops were brought to East Timor for the stated purpose of "wiping out" the last of the pro-independence movement Fretilin (the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor). Our information indicates Indonesian military activities continue. Msgr. Carlos F.X. Belo, the prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in East Timor, confirmed this in a document smuggled out of the country in spring 1985: "The war...goes on and continues to grow, which is witnessed by the constant arrival of Indonesian troops together with heavy war material, the deployment of more than 10 military helicopters for operational purposes and of several airforce combat aircraft." The document also listed the "successive, systematic and regular clean-up operations of the Indonesian army against centres of resistance", "the enlistment of minors as auxiliary forces in military operations", and "the recruitment of the more able members of the population and their preparation for military operations". [1]

In the summer 1985, Msgr. Belo visited Lisbon and met with Portuguese President Eanes and Prime Minister Soares. He informed them of the serious situation and continued fighting, proven by fresh Indonesian graves regularly filling up the Dili cemetery (Belo himself had officiated at a series of burials of Indonesian Catholic officers).[2]

Journalists who were permitted to visit East Timor briefly in July confirmed that the war continues and that parts of the country are still "rocked by sporadic fighting". One New York Times reporter noted that most of the tombstones in the Dili cemetrery bore the (Indonesian) word "gugur" which means "killed in action".[3] Authorities prevented the journalists from visiting Baucau in view of recent military action there, but Asiaweek reporter Andrée Feillard quoted military sources as saying that up to 30 Indonesian soldiers are killed every month, citing particular strife in the eastern zone, still largely under Fretilin control.[4]

Radio broadcasts from Fretilin, which resumed this spring for the first time since 1978, confirm this. A September 15 broadcast reports that "the occupation forces have (begun) a large offensive in the border region...there have been daily clashes with guerrillas."[5]

CONTINUED REPORTS OF MASS ARRESTS, DISAPPEARANCES, TORTURE AND MURDER

The Belo document also reported the "arrests, disappearances and the deportation of thousands of civilians during these nine years", noting in particular the "permanent threat of reprisals with summary execution by shooting of men and youths of the villages which are considered to be sympathetic, provide refuge or support for the resistance forces", and the "waves of arrests of villages, even the most simple and humble peasants".[6]

Amnesty International has documented the "systematic and persistent violation of human rights in East Timor" by Indonesian troops in detail elsewhere [7]. The existence of these violations is sometimes admitted by the Indonesian administration itself. For example, the Dili Police Chief, Major Ngusman Fuady, told Antara news agency on the eve of 1985 that mass disturbances in the city had been successfully repressed, and that cases of "slight torture" in Dili were down from 263 in 1983 to "just" 170 in 1984.[8]

FORCED RESETTLEMENT AND LACK OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

As Amnesty International has noted, "movement and communication within and beyond East Timor have been tightly controlled."[9] A principal means of control has been the forced resettlement of an estimated 150,000 to 300,000 Timorese in what Indonesia calls "resettlement villages" and the Timorese themselves call "concentration camps" (campos de concentracao). These camps are modelled on the "strategic hamlets" employed by American troops against the Vietnamese. Abysmal living conditions as well as lack of liberty are described by Msgr. Belo in the church document. Malnutrition and illness are chronic. [10]

TRANSMIGRATION OF INDONESIANS TO EAST TIMOR

Last year we described the new classification of East Timor as an "official resettlement area" and the migration of 500 peasants from Java and Bali to two towns in East Timor. This year Mario Carrascalao, governor of East Timor, announced plans for an additional 750 families to settle in East Timor in 1985. [11] This theft of land from the Timorese, many of whom are forced to live in the camps, illustrates the Indonesian tactic of smothering local resistance by diluting the population with migrants from central Indonesia.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

The Roman Catholic Church in East Timor reports that the religious identity of the Timorese is being abused, apparently as part of the campaign to eradicate Timorese culture: "By accusing priests, arresting those who teach

the catechism, banishing and slaughtering the Christians, they (Indonesians) are attempting to put an end to the religious feelings of the people and, as a consequence, the identity of the Timorese people itself." [12] Native animist beliefs are also attacked. Unlike Christianity, animism is not recognized as a "legitimate" religion by the Indonesian state ideology, the Pancasila, and, as Amnesty has observed elsewhere, animists have been beheaded, burned, beaten and stabbed to death in an Indonesian campaign against "black magic" and so-called witches.[13]

RECOMMENDATIONS

We, therefore, recommend that the Canadian delegation, in its role as observer, use its full influence to:

a) work to reinstate Indonesia in the list of countries being investigated under confidential procedure 1503;

b) support efforts to press the Indonesian government to fulfill its promises to allow independent observers to visit East Timor and observe conditions first hand;

c) help apply international pressure on Indonesian authorities to give free and unrestricted access to international relief and human rights groups to work in East Timor, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Amnesty International.

FOOTNOTES

1. Untitled church document, dated 1 January 1985, signed by the Council of Priests of the Diocese of Dili and by the Apostolic Administrator, Msgr. Carlos F.X. Belo. Msgr. Belo presented it to Pope John Paul II in person on 5 July 1985.

2. The Age (Melbourne), 4 September 1985.

3. Tapol Bulletin, July 1985

4. Asiaweek, 2 August 1985

5. Globe and Mail (Toronto), 7 December 1985

6. Msgr. Belo, op cit.

7. Amnesty International (AI) document ASDA 21/16/85, released 26 June 1985

8. Antara (Indonesia), 31 December 1984.

9. AI document, op cit.

10. Msgr. Belo, op cit.

11. Kompas (Indonesia), 20 March 1985.

12. Msgr. Belo, op cit.

13. AI document, op cit.